

Only three other phasiines were personally recorded by me during 1998. Single males of *Phania funesta* (Mg.) were found at Romney Sands TR 0823, coastal sand dunes, on 17 May and at Wrotham Water Downs TQ 6360, open chalk downland, on 25 July. A single male *Phasia obesa* (F.) was swept on 28 June from an area of calcareous grassland at Bredhurst TQ 79956175 whilst *P. pusilla* Mg. occurred at the same locality and also at Park Gate Down TR 168459 on 7 July.— LAURENCE CLEMONS, 14 St. John's Avenue, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 4NE.

Synchronised capture of The Vapourer *Orgyia antiqua* L. (Lep.: Lymantriidae) at lights in England and France?

As a day-flying insect, the male Vapourer is rather infrequently captured in nocturnal light traps, and then usually only if physically dislodged from a nearby perch (or perhaps confused by the mv light into thinking it is daylight?). The females are, of course, flightless. I was, therefore, rather surprised to attract seven or eight males to my lights at Tambrum's Farm, near Battlesbridge, South Essex on the night of 2 July 1999. The traps involved were located on, or just behind, the sea-defence wall of the River Crouch which separates the narrow strip of saltmarsh and tidal mud from the adjacent arable desert. I thought little more of this until the following evening, 3rd July, when I received a telephone call from Michael Marney at his home in Graddé, in the Département du Tarn of south-west France. Whilst discussing his previous night's captures he mentioned in passing that he had taken "several" male Vapourer, and that he was equally surprised to see them there. Michael's garden is surrounded by the Grésigne Forest, an ancient oak forest on limestone geology.

The synchronised emergence of insects is a well-known phenomenon, and in itself is not unusual. However, it does seem rather odd that an infrequent visitor to light should suddenly appear, in number, at separate two light traps on the same night, particularly when they are such a great distance apart. It can be clearly stated that at neither site was there agitation of the adjacent vegetation and so in both cases the moths appear to have arrived without artificial stimulation. I would be interested to know if other readers may have had a similar experience on or around the same date. — COLIN W. PLANT, 14 West Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 3QP.

Least Black Arches *Nola confusalis* (Herrich-Schaffer) (Lep. Nolidae) in Hertfordshire

In May or June 1998, I took a specimen of Least Black Arches *Nola confusalis* at Mardley Heath, Welwyn, Hertfordshire. The county recorder, Colin Plant, confirmed that this was, at that time, a new county record, though since then the presence of the moth since 1987 on the Rothamsted Estate at Harpenden has been published in this journal (Riley, *antea*: 71-94). My specimen was not identified until the end of the season, since it had been overlooked as a "micro" and no capture date was available.

On 11 May 1999, and again on 25 May, I was delighted to record this species again at the same place. It was netted at around 22:30 as it flew out of oak woodland towards mv light set up at the wood edge. Apart from Harpenden, the nearest known other records are in Essex (where a strong colony is known at Epping Forest, largely consisting of the dark form *ab. columbina* Image), and a very recent record from Ruislip Woods in Middlesex.

The moth is regarded as widely distributed, but rather local, throughout the British Isles by Skinner (1984. *Colour identification guide to moths of the British Isles*), although recent records may suggest that it is spreading.

Mardley Heath consists of oak-hornbeam woodland (some of which is regarded as ancient), and large areas of birch woodland which has grown over shallow chalk extraction pits. Other noteworthy species recorded at this site in 1998 include Poplar Lutestring *Tethea* or D.&S., Birch Mocha *Cyclophora albipunctata* Hufn., Brindled White-spot *Parectropis similaria* Hufn., Scarce Prominent *Odontosia carmelita* Esp. and Buff Footman *Eilema depressa* Esp.— ROB SOUTER, 54 Willowmead, Hertford, Hertfordshire AL14 2AT.

Least Black Arches *Nola confusalis* (Herrich-Schaffer) *ab. columbina* Image (Lep.: Nolidae) found outside Epping Forest

Examining the contents of my Skinner mv trap on 25 May 1999 I noticed a first for my garden in Bengeo, Hertfordshire (TL 324137) in the form of a Least Black Arches *Nola confusalis*. This is a moth of decidedly local distribution in the county, being recorded only from Harpenden (Riley, *antea* 71-94) and Mardley Heath (Souter, *antea* 198). Further examination of what was a rather greyish specimen suggested that it could be of the form *ab. columbina* previously only recorded from Epping Forest some 25 km to the south east in Essex. The nearest woodland is 1 km away. Colin Plant kindly confirmed this was indeed *ab. columbina* after examination of the specimen and a photograph I had taken.— ANDREW WOOD, 93 Bengeo Street, Hertford, SG14 3EZ.

Brimstone butterfly *Gonepteryx rhamni* L. (Lep.: Pieridae) egg-laying on dock *Rumex* sp.

Whilst walking along a country lane through an area of farmland near Pagham, Sussex, on 26 May 1999, I was most surprised indeed to encounter a female Brimstone butterfly in the act of oviposition on a dock *Rumex* plant. Altogether a total of four eggs were laid whilst I watched, on the under-surface of the leaves. As far as I am aware, buckthorn *Rhamnus catharticus* and alder buckthorn *Frangula alnus* are the only recorded food plants of this butterfly's larvae and this is confirmed in Emmet (1989. *Moths of Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland* 7 (1): p. 97) who repeats the observation of Frohawk (*Entomologist* 73: 68-69) that introduced *Rhamnus alaternus* and *R. alpina* may also be accepted.— PETER MAY, 6 Aigburth Avenue, Aldwick, Bognor Regis, West Sussex PO21 3DA.